

bridge to handle the more than 18,000 commuters who traveled across the dam each day.

In addition to the congestion on the narrow dam road, I argued that in the wake of the September 11 attacks, providing an alternative to traffic became a security risk as well. With the dam so close to Sacramento, the access to the dam was a tempting target to terrorists who might want to attack my hometown and community. Security was increased at the dam—the only facility in the nation with a public road running across it besides the Hoover Dam, and the only one adjacent to a heavily populated area. But many of us still had concerns.

Last week, the Department of the Interior through the Bureau of Reclamation—which runs the dam—came to the same conclusion: allowing traffic on the dam is too dangerous. Last Thursday they announced the closure of the dam road to all vehicle and foot traffic, effective this Friday, February 28, 2003. Said a spokesman for the bureau, “In order to protect the facility and the 900,000 people below it, we have decided to take this step.”

Unfortunately, there is still no new bridge to provide an alternative to the tens of thousands in the region who used the bridge as their avenue through the area. Those of us who live and commute in the area have less than a week to adjust our patterns.

Last year, my colleague Representative JOHN DOOLITTLE and I introduced legislation to build a new bridge. This bill passed the House Resources Committee. Today, Representative DOOLITTLE and I reintroduce this language with even greater necessity. The Bureau of Reclamation unilaterally decided to close the road. But they provided no alternative. They have assured me that they support an effort to provide an alternative and restore a method for crossing the region in the form of this new bridge. Chairman POMBO has already indicated that he will give this bill its proper consideration.

I urge my colleagues in the House to join me in supporting the effort to provide a safe and secure way for all those traveling in the Sacramento region—home to an international port, airport and two interstate highways—to continue to cross through this beautiful and productive region by passing this legislation and building a bridge to replace the Folsom Dam Road.

RECOGNIZING MARY JO ELWELL

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2003

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Mary Jo Elwell, a very special young woman who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Girl Scouts of America, Troop 3248, and in earning the most prestigious honor of the Gold Award.

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest achievement Attainable in girl scouting. To earn the Gold Award, a scout must complete five requirements, all of which promote community service, personal and spiritual growth, positive values, and leadership skills. The requirements include, (1.) earning four interest project patches, each of which requires seven activities that center on skill building, technology, service projects, and career exploration, (2.) earning the career exploration pin, which involves researching careers, writing resumes, and planning a career fair or trip, (3.) earning the senior girl scout leadership award, which requires a minimum of 30 hours of work using leadership skills, (4.) designing a self development plan that requires assessment of ability to interact with others and prioritize values, participation for a minimum of 15 hours in a community service project, and development of a plan to promote girl scouting, and (5.) spending a minimum of 50 hours planning and implementing a Girl Scout Gold Award project that has a positive lasting impact on the community.

For her Gold Award project, Mary Jo organized and ran a T-Ball program.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Mary Jo Elwell for her accomplishments with the Girl Scouts of America and for her efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of the Gold Award.

TRIBUTE TO DR. VELMA LAWS-CLAY FOR HER SERVICE TO THE CITIZENS OF GREATER BATTLE CREEK

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2003

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Dr. Velma Laws-Clay as Scene Magazine's Woman of the Year.

I am pleased to pay tribute to a woman whose vision, intellect and commitment to community service has made her one of Battle Creek, Michigan's best known and most respected citizens. Whether working quietly behind the scenes or out front leading the charge, Velma's positive attitude and strength of conviction serve as an inspiration to all who know her.

Velma has been described as the consummate community volunteer; giving generously of her time, talent and resources. She serves on numerous boards and committees including NorthPointe Woods, the Art Center of Battle Creek, and the Battle Creek Community Foundation, where she became the first African-American to serve as Board Chairman. One of her more prominent roles was serving as chairman of the year-long sojourner Truth 200th Anniversary Celebration and the Sojourner Truth Monument dedication, events which paid tribute to the historic legacy of one of Battle Creek's most famous citizens.

As her affiliation with the Art Center might suggest, Velma has a passion for the arts. It is this passion, along with her knowledge and admiration of her cultural heritage that led her, along with her sister Vivian, to assemble a vast private collection of African American art and artifacts. The collection, known as the “Journey to Freedom”, encompasses over 300 pieces, ranging from prints and drawings to mixed media and sculptures. It provides individuals the opportunity to experience and learn about the history of African Americans through the eyes and works of the artists.

Velma has been the recipient of many well-deserved accolades. In 2001 she was named Alumnus of the Year by Kellogg Community College and received an Alumni Achievement Award from Western Michigan University. She was also recognized as a George Award winner for her outstanding service to the community, and most recently, was presented with the prestigious Athena Award by the Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce.

Those who know and have worked with Velma state that her energy is contagious. She is a positive, motivating force that inspires the best in others. Through her actions and deeds, Velma serves not only as a strong community leader and visionary, but also as a tremendous role model for others in the community.

I am honored to recognize Dr. Velma Laws-Clay for her passionate devotion to promoting and improving the community in which she lives and for truly exemplifying service above self. I join with the citizens of Battle Creek in congratulating her on being named Scene Magazine's Woman of the Year.